

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1-7, 11-24, and 38-54 will be pending in the present application. Claims 1, 22 and 38 are the independent claims. Claims 8-10, 20 and 25-37 have been canceled herein without prejudice, to procure speedy allowance of the present application.

In the Official Action, dated April 22, 2005, claims 1, 2, 4-9, 11-21 and 25-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as allegedly claiming the same invention as that of claims 1, 2 and 4-33 of copending Application No. 09/900,059. Claims 25-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,918,223 (Blum). Claims 3 and 10 were objected to for depending from a rejected base claim, but were indicated to include allowable subject matter if rewritten into independent form including all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims.

Without conceding the propriety of the outstanding rejections, claims 3 and 10 have been rewritten herein into independent form, along with any intervening dependent claims, as amended claim 1 (based on allowable claim 10) and new claim 38 (based on allowable claim 3). Accordingly, claims 1 and 38 are believed allowable over the art of record. Claims 2-7, 11-19 and 21 depend from claim 1, and claims 39-54 depend from claim 38 (either directly or indirectly), and are thus believed allowable for the same reasons. Claims 22-24 were indicated as allowable in the Official Action, and accordingly, an early notice of allowance is respectfully requested for claims 1-7, 11-19, 21-24 and 38-54.


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PATENT

CONCLUSION

Applicants believe that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Office Action, and submit that Claims 1-7, 11-19, 21-24 and 38-54 of the application are in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and passage to issue of the application at the Examiner's earliest convenience is earnestly solicited.

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